

2003 Annual Report Executive Summary

Northwoods NiiJii Enterprise Community

Northwoods NiiJii Enterprise Community is a unique partnership among three Native American Tribes and eight municipal partners in rural northern Wisconsin. Encompassing only 335,000 square acres of primarily forest Reservation land, the population of 6320 individuals struggles to achieve personal success utilizing some of the lowest levels of income in the Nation. At the outset of the Strategic Plan, median family income averages from six to eleven thousand annually depending on the Reservation examined. Yet, these communities have a big vision (the alleviation of poverty), a big strategic plan (total budget of \$ 92 million), a large number of interested new partners (283), high community involvement (8464) and many ongoing projects (70). Of the \$92 million detailed in benchmarked project budgets, over \$45 million has already been received since project implementation began three and a half years ago, bringing these communities almost half way toward funding their ten-year strategic plan.

The \$750,000 EZ/EC seed funds spent to date have leveraged additional funding at a rate of 60:1. Partners and community members have brought an additional \$7.1 million of in-kind resources to the table to date. Including in-kind resources, the seed funds to leveraged resource ratio reached 70:1. NiiJii capacity building staff efforts have yielded \$2.5 million in direct resources to benchmark projects. Approximately \$10 million in grant applications have been submitted. A success ratio of 2 awards to 1 decline has been achieved.

During the calendar year 2003, the Northwoods NiiJii Enterprise Community continued its efforts to build sustainable communities by empowering citizens to foster partnerships and mobilize resources for the elimination of poverty for future generations. The following are examples of some of these achievements.

Building Capacity: Of the cumulative 8464 community participants engaged in the Enterprise Community (EC) program, 100 are active benchmark and task leaders. In addition, many more have been actively engaged in leadership roles and training programs (BM#8, 55, 57). In 2003, 283 new partnerships were created and more than 25 donors agencies coordinated.

Building Infrastructure: In 2003, two water and sewer projects (BM#18, 67) were completed, and three have been expanded to a second phase (BM#2, 9, 28). An additional roads projects (BM#3) has been completed, as well as improvements in street lighting (BM #33) and safety (BM#3, 20). New retail and office space have been constructed (BM #7), an industrial park expanded (BM #49), and housing developments (BM #32, 37, 39) and playgrounds (BM #59, 66) embellished. To date a total of 8 buildings have been built or renovated and 3 facilities improved. All help to expand and support Reservation economic development efforts.

Empowering Citizens through Education: Institutions of higher learning have been constructed or renovated (#29, #61), and programs to create youth jobs, involve parents with youth development and develop adult skills have been put in place (BM #27, 23, 24, 65). Projects to support healthy communities have been initiated (BM#26, 31, 40).

Preserving and Promoting the Environment: In 2003, two projects were completed that made substantive contributions to the Tribes' ability to protect environmental resources (BM # 45,44). An environmental education project was designed (BM#60) and a solid waste/recycling project improved (BM #22). Tourism development, focusing on the unique community attributes of Native American culture and heritage and the pristine environmental resources they seek to preserve, has yielded positive results (BM#5, 6, 16, 17, 35, 38, 52, 56, 64).

Building an Economic Base: To date 252 businesses have been assisted with support, planning or loans (BM# 14, 24, 42, 46, 50, 52, 54), 30 businesses attracted, 3 businesses expanded and 1 new business started. 623 jobs were created and 46 retained via implementation of the 70 EC projects, as well as 207 youth placed in jobs. \$90,000 in personal savings was generated (BM# 14).Nurturing business development and the creation of sustainable employment through comprehensive business support, advocacy, education, access to capital and incubation, will continue to be a focus with major impact over the next several years (BM#51, 53, 54).

And, the best is yet to come. Many more exciting projects are just beginning to launch, and will ultimately lead to the fulfillment of the vision of these NiiJii communities...the alleviation of poverty for future generations. NiiJii means good friends in the Ojibwa language and aspires to be the essence of combating poverty through partnership.